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MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

Integral Transforms

**A Visual Exploration Of The Social
Concept Of Relationship**

Abstract

INTEGRAL TRANSFORMS Research into the nature of the social concept of relationship. The work is a visual exploration of the nature of relationship as a concept and in practice. A study taking the form of an exhibition of paper forms constructed with textile techniques, exhibited at the Canberra School Of Art from January 27 to February 4, 2000, which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice project together with the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

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Acknowledgments

Supervisor	Ms Valerie Kirk, Head of Textiles Workshop
Consultants	Mr Nigel Lendon, Reader in Visual Art Ms Wendy Teakel, Lecturer in Sculpture

Ms Valerie Kirk was my supervisor. She brought to my study a perspective informed by the many facets of the textile arts in which she is involved - a practising artist, an art educator, an art critic, an author, and a University academic. I thank her for her contribution to my development.

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Dr Colin Ducker is my partner. He supported me throughout my study and beyond. He was my mentor and remains my first best friend.

INTRODUCTION

Why

Do we make so much of knowledge

Struggle so hard

To get some skill not worth the effort

(Euripedes in Collins 1991: p131)

At The Beginning

There is, it would seem, an intriguing intricacy and complexity in the concept of 'relationship'. It contains tension and harmony at the same time; it is a major influence on identity; and it contains the essence of existence for individuals and groups. In one sense, 'relationship' is a synergy that ripens when whole and unique individuals are brought together by a social construction. This study is both an exploration and a confession of this concept.

My study began in unfashioned observations of the perceptions held by others about the nature of relationship - as a concept and in practice. Over time, these observations evolved to a researchable question able to be pursued under the auspices of postgraduate study in visual arts. I sought to use the media, techniques and expressions of the visual arts to explore a social concept.

Perhaps the roots of my interest were set as my children grew to adulthood. Their perceptions of relationship diverged from mine and, in some ways, were underpinned by notions of individuality, change and transience. This was not superficial teenage rebellion against parental values; it was their response to the social setting in which they were immersed.

In confirmation of this, I had the fortune to work with many young adults, and their perceptions harmonised with those of my adult children. Indeed, they received with surprise and puzzlement many of my notions - including that I

had been with my partner for more than thirty years and that our relationship had developed to a point of mutuality.

In a more tangential sense, I was conscious that, through their interactions with significant others, some of my acquaintances - most of them about my age - portrayed notions of relationship that contrasted with mine. They, too, identified with individuality and, in the discourse and actions of many of these people, I could not detect the marks that I held significant - such as reciprocity and mutuality and a sense of shared history.

It could never be said that I am complacent about my understandings of such fundamental concepts as relationship, but these 'new' insights confronted my serenity. I sought to respond to these challenges through my strengths: my interests in the visual arts, particularly Textiles, Sculpture and Paint; my training in the visual arts; and my work history in Design.

This was the starting point for my postgraduate study in visual arts.

About Process

At the risk of oversimplification, it is reasonable to view my study through four lenses - four accounts of my work that form the bulk of this report. These accounts are not mutually exclusive and only loosely represent successive phases in my work. They are, essentially, ways of presenting the major points of realisation in my development across my candidature.

Recognition And Release

Central to my progress was my ability to challenge my existing knowledge base and the influence it held over my thinking. Fashion Design has been a large part of my work history. I had to shed the shackles that constrain Design-related work and, in part, my efforts were directed at questioning the preconceptions and assumptions that I brought to this study.

My grapple with my Fashion Design background was resolved not by denying it but by allowing it to have a presence in my work. My final works include perceptible links with pattern blocks and the matrix that is the structure of most fabrics.

Three Basic Constructs

The basis for the more substantive elements of my work was built on a directed interplay between:

- My explorations with materials, surfaces and forms in a studio setting; and
- The literatures from the fields of Sociology and Art (particularly Textiles, Paint and Sculpture).

From this emerged three fundamental and axial constructs - *individuality*, *commitment* and *contract*. My visual exploration of these was an expansive effort that drew me through considerable experimentation with surfaces, techniques and materials.

Intensification

My study was marked by two significant personal achievements:

- Out of the intended confusions that emerged from my visual experimentation and my grapple with my Design background, my aesthetic generated identity and strength.
- The direction of my work was - and was acknowledged by others as - justifiable and intelligent.

The confluence of these enabled me to move to a new level of boldness and to take on more significant aesthetic challenges.

The Final Work

My final works are, essentially, paper forms informed by textile techniques and surfaces. They represent relationship as a process of construction; they externalise the latent accretion of experience, proximity and time - central to the development of

substantive relationship - reciprocity and mutuality; and they expose the superimposition of deliberative acts of construction. It is in this that my work displays the levels of conceptualisation I was seeking.

About Method

Achievement in the visual arts - as in sciences and the social sciences - includes the ability to conceptualise. In this sense, conceptualising is about developing sufficient depth of understanding of an area that one can see the patterns, draw inferences, expose principle behind detail, and perceive underlying constructs; the mastery of facts and techniques is a necessary but not sufficient part of this process. My intentions in this study were to reach such levels of conceptualisation and to represent it through my final works.

When I began my study, I had questions to address - such as *How does relationship develop to the point of mutuality?* - but I did not have a clearly articulated visual response or a comprehensive statement of the thesis of my work. In response, I adopted a method that may be described as exploratory, reflexive and experimental. That is, I worked not by the predetermined and resolved procedures of a science but by a more organic process of juxtaposing the subject and object of my work and gaining impetus from their interactions.

In a seminar, *What Is Method*, Payne (1998) suggested that method was about the passage of motivating ideas and a means of navigating those ideas; Kirk (1998) suggested that method evolves in response to successes and failures - time and involvement are crucial inputs; and Lendon (1998) proposed that method involves finding the means to address a question - finding the language to explore the appropriate theory and practice, recognising the question of variability in different modes of practice which are appropriate to different outcomes.

In positions such as these, I found support and stimulus, particularly as they fostered a place for intuition, a place for visual speculation, and a place for trying to 'solve an unknown factor of life' (Hesse in Lippard 1976: p5). They emphasised the importance of grappling with the incomplete, working beyond unthinking ambiguity, and generating a level of satisfied resolution - personal and visual.

My work was, essentially, a studio based exploration of a social concept. I sought to use visual mediums, techniques and materials to generate expressions of social entities. This required a good deal of experimentation - What kinds of materials, surfaces and forms provided the most successful expressions of particular emotions, intellectual constructs and theoretical ideas?

The complement to my studio work was my exploration of the literatures, media reports, exhibitions, workshops and seminars¹ - all important in helping to expose the concepts and constructs fundamental to my topic. Indeed, my research for this study was the interplay of my studio work with these other informed sources - the reflexiveness referred to in other parts of this Report. Like the determined scaling of a rock face, I inched my way upward using discoveries and insights from one side to sustain and inform explorations on the other.

This journey is captured well in my visual diaries - ultimately, comprised of five volumes. Maintaining the diaries was arduous and required considerable discipline, but it proved to be a most valuable aspect of my approach to my study.

Among the most notable benefits to arise were:

¹ See visual diaries for details.

- Reflection was a pivotal part of my learning; it provided the necessary counterbalance to my exploratory work in the studio and through the literature. The diaries provided the basis for reflection and helped me to develop a dialogue with my work.
- The diary entries were contemporaneous notes and captured experiences as they occurred - not at some later time when images, emotions and impressions have been integrated and, perhaps, rationalised.
- The act of writing diary entries allowed (or forced) me to express feelings and emotions along with facts and descriptions. This provided the impetus for moving the intellectual and emotional blocks that occurred from time to time.
- The diaries provided strong support for the preparation of this report.

In some considerable part, the diaries supplement this report; there are many entries in the diaries that explain my thinking, decisions, processes, blockages and breakthroughs. I cannot capture them all in this report in anything other than a passing way.

RECOGNITION AND RELEASE

If, like Descartes, I ask myself how much I really know, I cannot answer that question until I know what counts as knowledge. Perhaps it also makes a difference what sort of person is making the claim to knowledge and in what kind of context.

(Pears 1971: pv)

Although I have undergraduate qualifications in visual arts, the bulk of my professional experience is in Design - the design and production of clothing. In this area, my knowledge, insights and technical skills are highly developed. To many, the most apparent pathway for me would have been through wearable art; indeed, my earliest proposals reflected such a bearing.

As I began my directed, systematic inquiry, two determining factors were exposed:

- My background acted as a proactive inhibitor of any efforts I might make in the area of wearable art. While the key elements in Fashion Design relate to the human body - movement, stance, bodily expression and facial features - they are expressed within, and bounded by particular contextual parameters, the most dominant of which are function, fit, moment and occasion. Such boundedness was a hindrance.
- My intentions were to engage in a process of learning that moved me well beyond my current visual and conceptual knowledge base. Thus, my candidature needed to include working beyond the fundamental assumptions and preconceptions that I carried into the study. Wearable art was too close to my existing capacities.

This meant that I had to search for direction and establish starting points that would lead me beyond any concept of predeterminedness. This created some confusion for me and for those who reckoned me by my Design background.

In reflection of my own intellectual situation, I began by experimenting with materials out of context - breaking away from the traditional and accepted ways of using items and materials. For example, I took whole and complete items - such as buttons which, traditionally, are closures in garments - and composed and constructed with them; I worked beads and rigid sticks into a manipulable fabric; I used found objects and created surfaces with them. These were transformative processes in the sense that whole and complete items were changed so they could exist in new ways. In this approach, I drew encouragement from Ruth Hadlow who advocates:

... the development of ideas through direct processes of making, a practice of risk, accident, trust and endless possibility. In contrast with pre-decided work that leads to a known end point ...

(Hadlow 1998: Workshop Descriptor)

In the process and outcomes of this work, I found resonance with the mathematical process of Integral Transforms. The term refers to a process in which mathematical expressions are subjected to selected transformations that render them useable and facilitative in higher order processes (see, for example, Davies 1978). It is about giving new 'facial' casts to the constituent mathematical expressions so they can participate in integrative processes. I detected a useful correspondence between this idea and the ways I was working with materials, surfaces and form, and *Integral Transforms* became the working title for my study.

My thinking surged under the confluence of two particular experiences. The first was my participation in a paper workshop². Here, I worked with the fragile Kozo paper, initially in planar form but later in three-dimensional structures. The experience broadened my thinking of what constitutes contemporary textile art; and it opened up ways of exploring the connection between fragility and strength - elements that became important in my later representations of relationship.

The second experience was a challenge to experiment with change of scale. A highly experienced artist related to me the fear she held of breaking beyond her well-developed and successful formula. Yet, the essence of my approach was just such a move - particularly through enlargement. I had noted in the work of Eva Hesse a degree of incautiousness, particularly when she wrote about her work exceeding what she knows:

It is my main concern to go beyond what I know and what I can know.
(Hesse 1992: p20).

Her work seeks to be bigger than her knowledge base might allow; in her diary notes she suggests she must not let her existing knowledge delimit her work. She talks about the importance of factors such as repetition in enlarging a statement (in Lippard 1976).

I drew inspiration from this to transform the scale of my work and ventured to boldness - though not to the level of recklessness that Hesse promotes. I experimented with the influence of scale, with the result that my work developed a sensitivity to the connection between scale and space - the context entered the question in quite dramatic ways - and of techniques for developing intelligent scale changes.

² 'Japanese Papermaking' Chika Ohgi, Shift Symposium, Canberra School Of Art, July 1998.

There were four significant outcomes of the work I undertook in response to these experiences:

- My work with change of scale enabled me to capture the notion of fragility within structure. By transforming, and developing ways of using delicate materials in a structural framework, I was able to establish a connection between fragility and strength so important in my interpretation of the concept of relationship.
- I generated in my work an analog of the matrix (physical and virtual) upon which weave and related textile techniques are founded. In this analog, however, the inertness of the textile matrix became more active and visible; I exposed rather than camouflaged the matrix. This became important in the development of my visual aesthetic.
- I worked through the challenge of my Design background. The solution lay not in separating myself from my background but in exposing and acknowledging it, and recognising the boundedness that has characterised it. I was able, therefore, to take it with me into the visual expressions and statements I sought to make about my topic, relationship. In an unashamed way, much of my work carries with it manifestations of body, construction, and the warp and weft of the physical matrix that underboards most fabrics.
- My work, clearly, teased the unwritten boundaries that have been erected around the various visual disciplines. But I did not take this as a limitation and was not prepared to accept any rebuke that this might attract. If contemporary art includes crossing boundaries to establish new meanings, then Textiles is well positioned to play such a role.

The visual expressions of the outcomes of these explorations are represented in Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 11 & 13 (Appendix One).

THREE BASIC CONSTRUCTS

Pragmatism has no objection
whatever to the realising of
abstractions, so long as you get
among particulars with their aid and
they actually carry you somewhere.

(James 1967: p40)

My exploration of the visual expression of relationship involved the interleaving of experimental visual work (particularly materials, surfaces and form) with the literature (particularly of Sociology and Art). This sensitised me to the importance of coming to grips with the basic constructs upon which the concept of relationship is built. Here, 'individuality' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1999; Porter 1995), 'commitment' (Lerner 1990; Hendricks 1992) and 'contract' (Whitfield 1993) acted as stepping stones to my understanding of relationship as a process of construction.

Individuality

I do not recall any 'talk' about individuality in my young adulthood; nor do I recall its being portrayed as pivotal to any concept of relationship. Despite the dominance of mutuality and reciprocity in my understanding and practice of relationship, clearly I am imbued by individuality and have influenced my children accordingly. The role of individuality in the ideals of relationship and in sustaining social groups intrigued me.

In 'individuality', I am using the term in ways similar to those of Porter (1995) and Lawrence-Lightfoot (1999) - it is about personal fulfilment, self-development, individual rights, and expression of unique identity; I am not referring to 'individualism' which, as Porter says, is about egocentric independence and a selfish concern for one's self-interest.

In my explorations of individuality, I composed with materials that, of themselves, already had identity, form and function - a kind of rigidity that takes exception to being manipulated, particularly if it involves loss of identity. To generate insights into the meaning of 'individuality', I worked from observations of, and connections with the natural forms and textures of these materials, and began a systematic process of transforming materials in terms of (one or more of) their state, function, purpose, context, place and dimension - challenges posed by individuality.

Under transformation, the materials acquired new characteristics which enabled them to participate in constructions that would have been denied them in their original form. For example, I transformed fabric that may be characterised as soft, fluid and essentially planar into a rigid, inflexible and moulded form. While it retained its identity as fabric, it was rendered useable in new ways (and this harmonised with my working title, *Integral Transforms*).

César's work often reflects such transformative processes, as illustrated in his *Relief* (1961). His approach to this, and related works involved courageous changes to the materials - described by Read as:

*César sees in the result of this mechanical compression a **new stage of metal**, one subjected, so to speak, to a quintessential reduction.*
(Read 1964: p270)

But he takes the transformation more literally than I intended.

To some extent, my thinking was influenced by Kurt Schwitters. I found in his work some of the elements that provided points of departure for my own study. For example, in *Fernspr* (1926) he merges disparate elements with the help of nails, glue, paper, rags, hammers, oil paint, pieces of lace and machinery parts. In doing so, he connects objects that have individual form and function; he uses colour, direction and juxtaposition to transform many into one - yet each component retains its identity.

Similarly, my thinking was influenced by Wassily Kandinsky. Through composition, he gives identity to colour and shape; and he uses juxtaposition of colour and shape to convey mystical experience.

Naturalistic elements began to disappear, to be replaced by fields of tensions.

(Tio Bellido 1988: Frontispiece)

His close connection with spirituality as a source of inspiration provided a backdrop for my work with individuality and, more generally, with relationship.

I had noted the importance of surface as an aesthetic in contemporary Textiles, as illustrated in *Bleach, Buckle and Burn* by Jill Pettifer and Annie Trevillian (Boyling 1998: p33). It would appear there has been a searching for new ways of treating surfaces, and installation art has found a significant place in bringing together surface, space and form. These had emerged to hold a place in my work and, thus, some contemporary artists became important in the shaping of my study:

Tori de Mestre

I grew up in the same area as that from which de Mestre has taken much of her inspiration, and her work resonates with latent images in my life.

Inge Hunter

I was taken by Hunter's openness - her willingness to expose the personal. She sheds light on ways of being, relating and achieving, and confronts social issues; she portrays an avidness for exploring the nature and qualities of materials and media.

Marta Rogoyska

Rogoyska works extensively in woven tapestries, and gouache and collage. Her work is evocative of relationship, and her imagery is 'optimistic; it is zestful, dynamic and full of *joie de vivre*.' (Koumis 1996: p53).

Rosalie Gascoigne

Gascoigne exploits the intrinsic qualities and potential of materials and objects, including those which frequently are overlooked because of their defunctness and obsolescence. She takes materials and objects out of context and reconstructs them as an expression of what she saw in them.

Gascoigne's use of found objects that are weathered and aged is aptly summed in her comment:

Past experience gets woven into the work.

(Gascoigne 1999)

Taking a lead from these influences - and particularly from Gascoigne - my work was experimental and initiatory in the sense that I allowed the materials that I confronted to lead the way. I learnt to step-off into the unknown and accept the challenge of educing a valid outcome. I worked in ways that had concentration and purpose, and this gave my work the 'researchness' I expected of my postgraduate study - and reflected my ability to move well beyond my Design background.

The most conspicuous of my expressions of individuality are portrayed in Figures 5 & 6 (Appendix One). In this, I depict a place for individuality in relationship by displaying the separateness of the components within an overall social environment; the surface treatments provide the transformative attributes that create a place for individuality. Change and transience - the necessary collaborators of individuality - are possible here and individuals remain intact as their social circumstances change. The analog of the textile matrix I had generated in earlier works is prominent here.

Commitment

The exposure and exploration of individuality raised for me concerns about the notion of commitment, an element which I had long defended as a fundamental. In the sense that commitment implies both concentration and enlargement of self (Hendricks 1992), I used these attributes as a basis for expanding my work.

In my earlier exploration of scale, I had noted the work of Henry Moore³ and his emphasis on shape and form. He connects parts within form and emphasises form in his drawings by the heavy application of the medium. I am guilty of applying mediums in heavy ways; my interest was in the laying down and overlaying and reworking of mediums as a parallel to the construction and laying down of strata such as experience, proximity and time. In some ways, this 'thickness' contained the substantiality of commitment.

As revealed in my visual diaries, several artists provided precedent and support for this aspect of my work. For example:

*Alberto Burni*⁴

Brings surface into significance, as portrayed through his work, *Rag Composition*.

*Antoni Tàpies*⁵

Works with surfaces that have strong textural qualities, such as relief. There is a complex of marks and layers - sand, rag, wood, weathered stone - within a structure; he invented to expose reality.

*Julie Montgarrett*⁶

Integrates found objects, combinations of objects, wraps and layers.

Elizabeth Larda

Focuses on her sense of time and place, and collages and embeds a variety of materials.

³ See, for example, Clark (1974).

⁴ See, for example, Calvesi (1975).

⁵ See, for example, Vicens (1971) and Augusti (1997).

⁶ See, for example, Montgarrett (1997).

In one significant sense, commitment fosters growth (Lerner 1990). Thus, my work became larger through wrapping and embedding and layering; collage and assemblage, became dominant in my work. It was a valuable way of exploring the accumulation of experience, proximity and time and my representations of this are displayed in Figures 7, 8, 9 & 10 (Appendix One).

Teakel (1998) described these works as creating 'tight, intimate spaces'; this was part of my intention. But she confronted me in her suggestion that it carried 'baggage of modernist art'. This was a significant comment in the sense that it alerted me to the irreverence with which I treat 'schools of thought' and 'movements'. I fear being captured or confined by them and, as noted earlier in this report, seek to travel roughshod over such boundaries.

The breaking of boundaries, layering and enlargement - including through change of scale - and the boldness to exceed the comfort of my personal knowledge and emotional bases, exemplified my notion of commitment. It required a willingness - perhaps, a daringness - to create something deeper than the superficialities of life.

I'm not the type to rub surfaces in some teflon mating game.
(Fenton-Kearne 1998)

One of the outcomes of this period was the realisation that relationship does not result solely from the simple amassing of experience and interaction; proximity and the passage of time alone do not create relationship. Rather, relationship develops through deliberate and directed action; it is about building and constructing. This broke the amorphousness that often was associated with my collage and assemblage. While they provided the foundations, I had to superimpose structures, and this generated my understanding of relationship as developing in stages which are constructed through deliberate and transformative actions.

Contract

Don't you think relationships with people are a bargain, a contract? said Martine. I don't mean anything as unsubtle as those Hollywood prenuptial agreements, but the contracts are there, unspoken and certainly unsigned, in people being in love, being together, being married, and they're different for everybody, and always being negotiated.

(Halligan 1998: p316)

My efforts with commitment triggered an understanding of relationship as being framed by assumptions and actions and interactions and tensions (Whitfield 1993), many of which I had taken for granted - not in a nonchalant or indifferent sense but in the sense that they had become so embedded in my ways of thinking that their presence was unnoticeable and, perhaps, regularised - like embedded guidelines. Now, I was exposing them.

These distilled spirits of relationship form the basis for 'contract' as an element of relationship (Whitfield 1993), and are represented by Figures 11, 12, 13 & 14 (Appendix One). In this work, I used the idea of containers to explore the boundedness and confined conditions within which relationship grows. I was influenced - at least in part - by contemporary basket makers. For example, the works of McQueen (1992) and Rossbach (University of Hawaii 1993: p71) portray the containerisation of experience, and this initiated my responses to the negotiated, contractual aspects of relationship. Once again, I was sensitive to the basic matrix upon which much textile work is formulated and that, in many textile applications, it remains unnoticeable in the final works. But by exposing that matrix I revealed the connections and opportunities that forge a contract between artist and concept.

My work here developed as an aesthetic metaphor for contract. In some instances, the overlapping of materials suggested the nest-like qualities of security and comfort (Figures 11 & 12 - Appendix One); others were more organic and revealed essential tensions and stresses, pliability and

flexibility under which contract labours (Figure 14 - Appendix One). Some had an openness of structure suggestive of fragility (Figure 13 - Appendix One); and some disclosed symbols for boundaries and direction (Figure 14 - Appendix One). These works, particularly the containers, exhibited characteristics of contract as a constituent of long-term relationship.

While I had exposed much and progressed well, I had reached the point where my explorations needed to take me deeper; I needed to conceive relationship with a degree of conceptual sophistication and refinement; I needed to develop in my work a high level of conceptualisation. This required, therefore, a period of intensification.

INTENSIFICATION

The particular is always a match for
the universal; the universal always
has to accommodate itself to the
particular

(Goethe in Eisner 1991: p197)

A combination of personal and academic factors gave me the opportunity to take stock of my progress. For example, throughout my candidature, I had the fortune to submit my work to formal reviews by staff and peers of the School Of Art. These helped me reflect on my progress and delineate the next steps; I valued these opportunities.

But, following one of my major reviews, I entered a period of deliberate critical reflection - akin to the installation of a weir in a river that forces the flow to subside and the water to deepen. I took time to reflect on media and technique, on my management of process, on the adequacy of my visual expression, and on the soundness of my emerging visual aesthetic.

It is reasonable to describe many of the activities of day-to-day study as reactive. That is, gathering materials, searching libraries, experimenting with media and technique, meeting deadlines, attending seminars, visiting exhibitions and galleries, interacting with peers and staff were activities that, for me, had a reactive quality. This was not to deny the value and centrality of such activities to my study; it was to say that there was a constancy about the nature and level of engagement they demanded. My progress, however, required that I engage with my work at another level, too - a systemic level that allowed me to see the longer-term trends in my work, to see the structural aspects of the process I was undertaking, and to operate at a 'generative level' (Senge's term 1990: p52). It was through the critical, reflective examination of my work that I was able to see where I had been and make more informed and composed decisions about direction.

Though not characterised by abundant tangible output, my stepping back from the liveliness of daily activity stimulated the emergence of meta-level understandings and deeper insights; it promoted the consolidation of my direction. In this sense, it was a highly productive period from which two particular realisations emerged:

- I gained an appreciation of the strengths I had developed, particularly in respect of the process of my learning and development, and the evolution of my visual aesthetic. In terms of the former, I understood the place of exploration, reflection and interaction (with others, with the literatures, with other visual work); in terms of the latter, I had generated a good level of conceptualisation of the creative process, and I had sufficient facility with the language that I could communicate within the dominant spheres of influence. These signalled my appreciation of my maturity.
- Beyond this, I appreciated that, through my visual work, I had exposed the weakness of any simple conception of relationship. Individuality, commitment and contract were basic constructs; but my expression would need to signify a number of other attributes, some of which amounted to seemingly contrasting couplets: strength and fragility, complexity and simplicity, flexibility and rigidity, connection and independence. And it needed to portray stages of development and deliberative acts of construction (Glasser 1999).

In all the visual expressions I had generated so far, none portrayed the complexity of relationship in any complete sense. For example, the heavy, layered containers of Figure 12 (Appendix One) expressed the strong, long-term, secure and unbreakable of commitment, but they did not capture the fragility that characterises contract; nor did they portray the flexibility within which individuality thrives. My challenge, therefore, was to develop an expression for the simultaneity of the many facets of relationship.

From this emerged some influential decisions:

- By working from the notion of relationship as a process of building (Whitfield 1993; Glasser 1999), construction and construction techniques would become dominant.
- Construction and evolution - as processes in relationship - and of 'the longer term' - as a determinant of essential qualities of relationship - would become important in my work.
- The expression I sought would be three dimensional. Form, rather than planar expression, would provide for multiple views of my work, and this was important in capturing the variety of elements of my expression.
- Structure - achieved through overlapping and intermeshing and connecting and load-bearing - would provide the sense of connection I sought to make.

THE FINAL WORKS

My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of phenomena that may fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries.

(Peshkin 1985: p280)

A significant portion of the work of Albert Einstein is represented by the renowned equation, $E = mc^2$. This is a statement of specific form and is the product of work that spanned many years. The surficial presentation of this as a product is very simple – five symbols arranged in cryptic form on a page. But it is a particular permutation of symbols, and represents Einstein's thesis about the relationship between energy and mass. The genius of Einstein's insights, the story that he seeks to portray, and the intellectual and emotional processes for which he is celebrated, culminate in an outward expression which is, *prima facie*, a very simple statement. Those schooled in the underpinning processes appreciate the significance of the product.

The purpose of this analogy is to emphasise the importance of process in my own work. The product of my candidature is a set of simple visual symbols that have been put together in a way that represents my thesis about the nature of relationship. Regardless of the outward simplicity (or complexity) of the product, it remains a representation of my process. The process, rich and extended as it has been, is reduced to a set of symbols that emerge not only from my explorations and development but also from the application of a range of external filters - the requirements of postgraduate study, the rigours of the examination process and the expectations of public exhibition. Those close to me appreciate the significance of the product.

The product - my final works⁷ - is comprised of three primary representations, each a statement of relationship:

<i>Protean Forms</i>	Express relationship at the most monumental level, portraying the broader social connectivities and structures.
<i>Mise Matrices</i>	Express relationship at the level of connection, portraying the contracts, guidelines, borders and parameters within which relationship develops.
<i>Catenate Constructions</i>	Express relationship at the most intimate and personal level, dominated by proximity, reciprocity and mutuality.

These works capture several themes important to my final expression:

- They disclose the underpinning instability of relationship and reveal how deliberative acts of construction are required to generate growth in relationship.
- The parts from which the forms are made are imbued with a range of seemingly contrasting couplets: fragility and strength; connection and independence; predictability and spontaneity; and flexibility and rigidity.
- The surfaces - created by overlapping, meshing and sectioning - generate complicated marks and patterns that reflect the complexity of relationship as a concept.

⁷ It is reasonable to argue that this report and the five volumes of visual diaries also are part of my final works - my product.

Protean⁸ Forms

Figures 15 & 16 (Appendix One)

Layered pattern paper, cotton thread, overcast stitching.

Columnar stacked blocks.

Ranging in height from 2m to 3.5m.

The blocks are constructions from the transformed fragile pattern paper and incorporate the repetitive complexity of overlapping marks. The separateness of the components reinforces individuality and permits change according to the setting in which they are embedded.

In its untransformed state, pattern paper is fragile. Its function is to participate in a process; it contains marks that represent construction and direction. By transforming its fragility into rigidity, the pattern paper becomes a product, able to be used in construction as an integral part of the end product. What was a simple, fragile, concise guideline as part of process now is a complex and intriguing material as part of a product. The layering of this material generates an interplay of constituent marks and produces a skin-like quality that reflects my emphasis on relationship in human terms.

At an expansive and extended level, these pieces portray the inherent instability of relationship - external pressures can lead to destabilisation. In the multiple juxtapositions available, they celebrate the emergence of manifold modes of relationship within malleable and changeable social structures.

In an act of homonymic symbolism, the 'blocks' respond to my background in Fashion Design. They connect construction with the human form and to growth and development over time. It is here that I acknowledge and capitalise on my background in Design and allow it to contribute in positive ways to my current endeavour.

⁸ Characterised by the ability to change or vary in form.

Mise⁹ Matrices

Figure 18 (Appendix One)

Pattern paper, starch paste, wire ties.

A formal composition of woven paper crates.

Ranging in dimension from 43 cm x 43 cm to 125 cm x 43 cm.

The crates are constructions from transformed pattern paper and are framed by the basic matrix evident in textiles and fabrics. While many textile techniques (weave, stitch, tapestry) create or use such a matrix - typically, in a finer and more discreet way - I have exposed the matrix to make it explicit. I have used it to signify the weaving of personal contracts, characterised simultaneously by fragility and strength.

The surface presented in these pieces suggests reinforcement and strength and uses repetition to infer enlargement. The interstices of the matrix provide negative spaces that report to the positive spaces created by the blocks in the *Protean Forms*. The marks and messages in the materials personify the shared, but latent directions that constitute contract and which take on meanings specific to the individual.

The transformative processes of folding, twisting, impregnating with starch paste and weaving-while-wet generate the rigidity and strength to be self-supporting. The panels interlock, held together by ties that have been described by an observer as 'the vernacular of the structures' and 'a significant element in the act of construction'.

These pieces symbolise the guidelines and parameters of the unwritten, unspoken, latent contracts that provide the foundation for relationship and which provide the boundaries within which reciprocity is enacted.

⁹ A settlement and agreement.

Catenate¹⁰ Constructions

Figure 17 (Appendix One)

Pattern paper, weathered wood, metal, cotton thread, adhesive.

Assemblages of paper constructions in paired composition.

26 cm x 46 cm.

These compositions are compact and tightly assembled constructions. The dominant material is pattern paper that has been folded, twisted, impregnated with starch paste and sectioned. This provides not only rigidity and strength but also a capacity to bear loads. The paper creates the context for the story of relationship, carried in the weathered, aged wood and metal.

These pieces are characterised by reciprocity, mutuality and the personal; they are about relationship in its long-standing, established form. The boldness, looseness and protrusiveness displayed in the other representations have been abraded by time, proximity and experience. Awkwardness has grown into respect and harmony, diminishing the space and distance required within relationship; the interstices have receded as intimacy has grown.

The pieces reflect the maturity of the individual - 'got it together' within a context of closeness and attachment. Relationship is binary, as reflected in the pairing of the pieces, and the pabulum is rich enough for both individuality and independence - and other seemingly contrasting couplets - to coexist.

¹⁰ Linking into a connected succession.

A Concluding Statement

This study seeks to express, visually, the nature of relationship - as a concept and in practice.

Considerable interest has been expressed in my intentions and the reasoning behind my final works and how I arrived at these particular expressions. In deference to this interest, I can say to the observer that these final works can be viewed through at least four lenses. The first reveals the challenge I faced in exposing and reconciling the existing assumptions and values that I brought to my study - a prerequisite for moving forward. The second is my explication of three basic constructs (individuality, commitment and contract) through explorations with surface, relief, materials and forms. The third lens reveals the reflective - and somewhat personal - processes that generated conceptually stronger visual expressions - a move from a focus on details to the conceptualisation of principles. The final lens focuses on an expression of relationship as a process of construction, with its inherent contracts, instabilities, fragilities and strengths.

But, my development over the period of my candidature has led me to a new position - I have grown beyond any defensiveness that may have plagued the early periods of my study. In a somewhat paradoxical sense, it is no longer important to explain to observers my intentions or the reasoning behind my work or the process of my development. The decisions have been realised and the work is complete. I am saying to the observer, 'Read it as you will; my interest is in your readings' - I know the work is embedded with multiple interpretations. This is where my learning is now.

Appendix One

Figures

- Figure 1 Experiments in the transformation of materials
- Figure 2 Experiments in the transformation of materials
- Figure 3 Experiments in the transformation of materials
- Figure 4 Experiments in the transformation of materials
- Figure 5 Exposing the basic matrix
- Figure 6 Exposing the basic matrix
- Figure 7 Exploring layered surfaces
- Figure 8 Exploring layered surfaces
- Figure 9 Building and layering
- Figure 10 Building and layering
- Figure 11 Containers as a metaphor for contract
- Figure 12 Layering in three dimensional forms
- Figure 13 Experiments with change of scale
- Figure 14 Containers as a metaphor for contract
- Figure 15 The final works - Protean Forms
- Figure 16 The final works - Protean Forms
- Figure 17 The final works - Catenate Constructions
- Figure 18 The final works - Mise Matrices

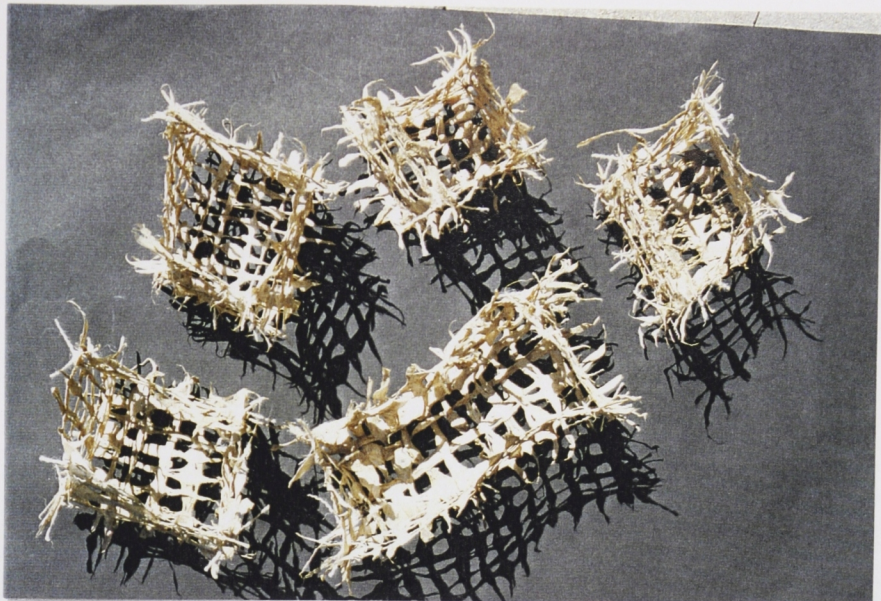


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

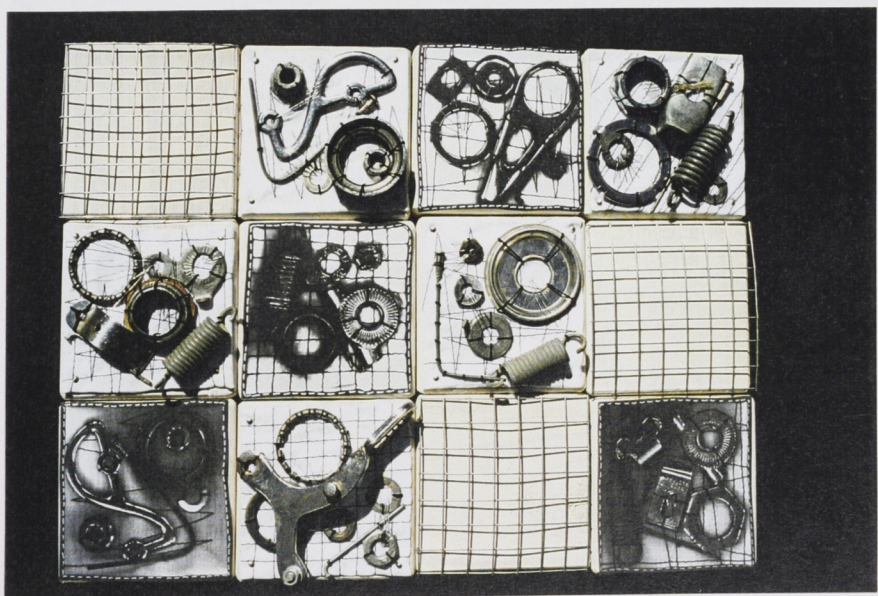


Figure 6

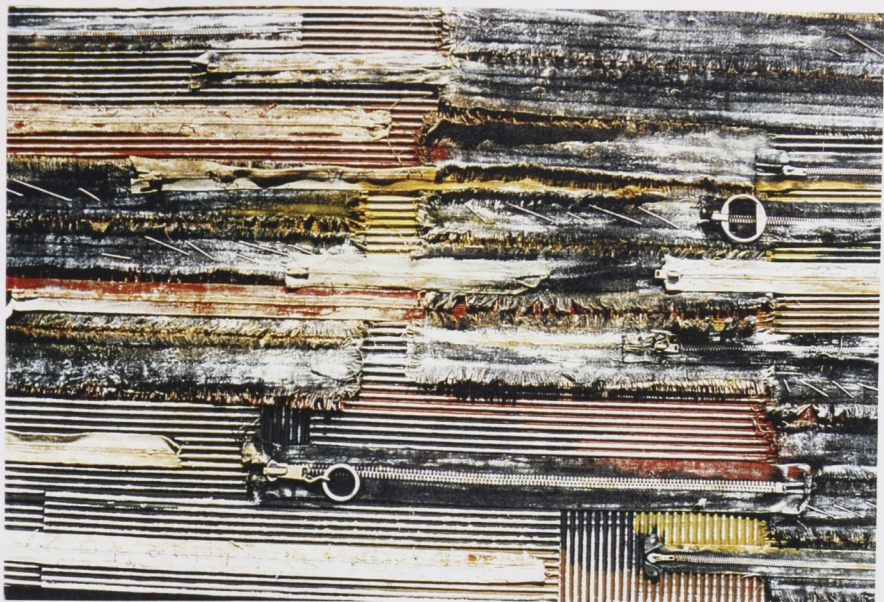


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

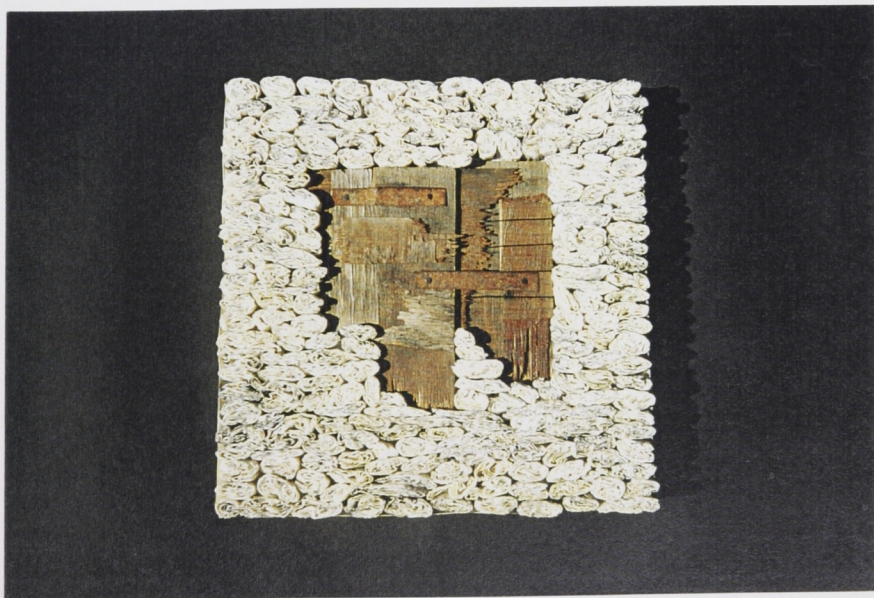


Figure 10



Figure11

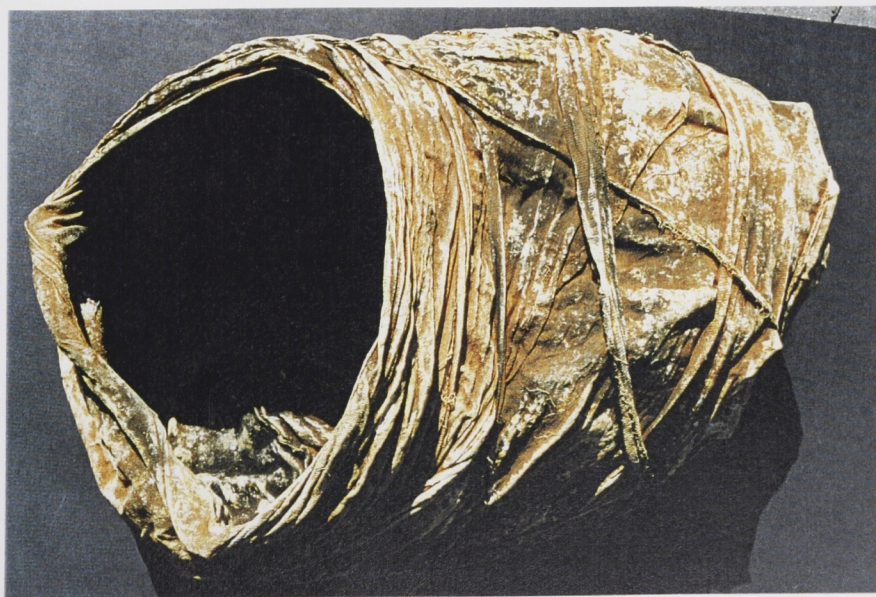


Figure 12

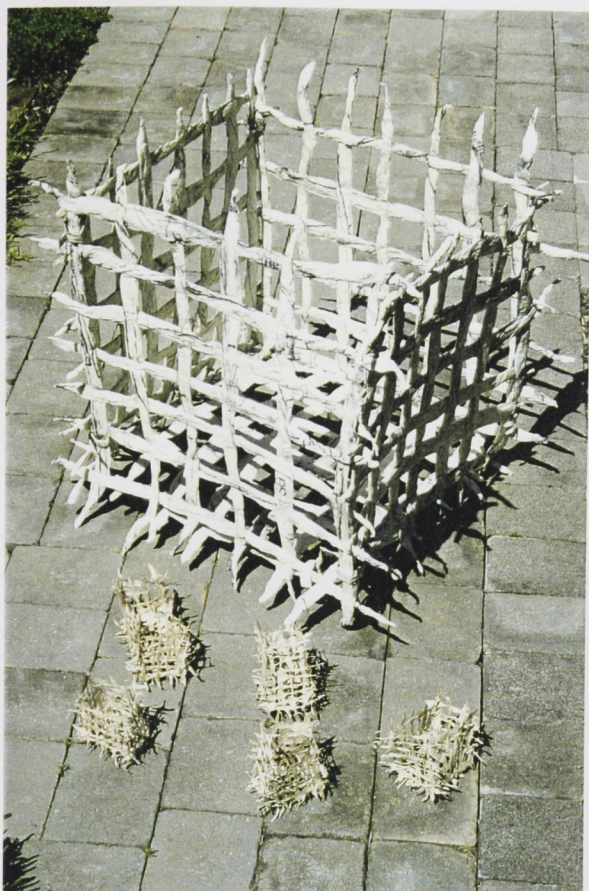


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

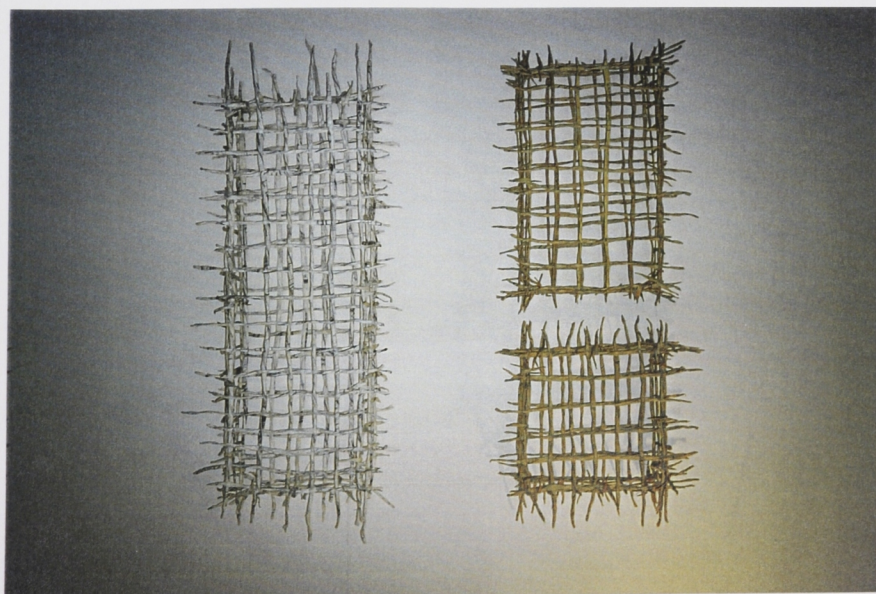


Figure 18

Appendix Two

Bibliography

The literature that informed this study is separable into two parts:

- That to which I have made reference in the text of this report; I have listed these under the heading, **References**.
- That which has helped to shape my thinking but which does not have a specific reference within the text of the report. This, more appropriately, I have listed under the heading, **Related Reading**.

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Appendix Three

Study Program

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Institute of the Arts

Canberra School of Art
Master of Visual Arts (MVA)

PROGRAM & RESEARCH PLAN 1988/9
Camille Ducker (3150479)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to describe the Program for my study in the Master of Visual Arts (MVA) by part-time study in the Textiles Workshop.
- 1.2 The ideas presented in this paper represent my early thinking; I intend that they alter in response to my explorations of the scholarly literature, my experimentation with ideas, my interactions with others, and my reflections on issues both contemporary and historical. This will be a process of personal and professional growth.
- 1.3 This paper has been developed in accord with the advice provided by the document, *Visual Arts Graduate Program 1998/9: Program and Research Plan development advice*, prepared by the Convenor, Visual Arts Graduate Program.

2 Focus of the Study

- This section identifies what my work is about - my thesis - and the possibilities I seek to explore.
- 2.1 There is, it would seem, an intriguing intricacy and complexity in the concept of 'relationship'. It contains tension and harmony at the same time; it is a major influence on identity; and it contains the essence of existence for individuals and groups. In one sense, 'relationship' is a synergy that ripens when whole and unique individuals are brought together by a social construction. My study is both an exploration and a confession of this concept.
 - 2.2 At this early stage, I am not able to provide a clearly articulated, comprehensive statement of the thesis of my work - the message and vision of my work. However, I have a number of significant starting points. For example:
 - 2.2.1 I have established a working title, *Integral Transforms*. The term originates in higher mathematics. It refers to a process in which mathematical expressions are subjected to selected transformations that render them useable and facilitative in higher order processes. It is about giving new facial casts to the constituent expressions so that they can participate in integrative processes. There is a useful correspondence between this and the sinuous processes and meanings in 'relationship'.
 - 2.2.2 My attention is captured by my attempts to compose with materials that, of themselves, already have identity, form and function - a kind of rigidity that objects to manipulation. I am working from observations of, and connections with the natural forms and textures of these materials, and I

am gaining inspiration from removing them from their contexts. I am transforming materials in terms of (one or more of) their state, function, purpose, context, place, dimension.

In this, the materials take on new identities which enable them to participate in constructions which would be denied to them in their original form. For example, I have transformed fabric that may be characterised as soft, fluid and essentially planar into a rigid, inflexible and pointed form. This renders the fabric useable in new ways. There is a strong connection with the notion of *Integral Transforms*.

2.2.3 My research is guided by questions such as:

- What kind of unity is engendered when I compose with these materials?
- What are the attributes of this unity - is it, in some way, illusory?
- What are the ramifications - particularly in respect of the integrity of the constituents - of forging some notion of relationship with these materials?

2.3 Although I have researchable questions, I do not have predetermined answers. My work is earthy and experimental. It is becoming more adventurous in the sense that I am allowing the materials that I confront to lead the way. But it is also becoming more systematic in the sense that I am prepared to step-off into the unknown and accept the challenge of educing an outcome that satisfies my goals - at least at one point in time - and which I present for public scrutiny. I am working in ways that have intensity and purpose, and this gives my work its 'researchness'.

3 Context and References

This section identifies the methods of approach I intend to take, the work by other artists that is relevant, and the case-studies I intend to undertake. It identifies the way in which the proposed work sits in relation to the traditions which are relevant for my work, whose work I will be referring to, the social and Art historical contexts for the study, and the context of contemporary critical debate to which my work relates.

- 3.1 My project will focus on studio work; my explorations will involve drawing, collage and assemblage as twentieth century art forms - and their equivalents in the area of Textiles - using the qualities of materials and objects as starting points. One vision of my final work is a reflection of my explorations in collage and assemblage, and their translation into forms - a collection of forms that celebrate unity through eclecticism and provide a basis for reflecting on 'relationship'.
- 3.2 I recognise the influence that Design has had on me - it's a large part of my work history. I need to shed the shackles that constrain Design-related work. My early efforts in Workshop to question my preconceptions and assumptions, and to establish direction, have begun to release me from the dominance of function.
- 3.3 To some extent, my thinking has been influenced by Kurt Schwitters. I detect in his work some of the elements that might provide points of departure for my own study. For example, in *Fernspr* (1926) he merged disparate elements with the help of nails, glue, paper, rags, hammers, oil paint, bits of lace and machinery parts. In doing so, he connected objects that have independent form and function; he used colour, direction and juxtaposition to transform many into one.
- 3.4 Similarly, my thinking has been influenced by Wassily Kandinsky. Through composition, he seems to give identity to colour and shape; he uses juxtaposition of colour and shape to convey mystical experience ... 'naturalistic elements began to disappear, to be replaced by fields of tensions' (Tio Bellido 1988: Frontispiece). His close connection with spirituality as a source of inspiration provides a backdrop for my work with 'relationship'.

- 3.5 Surface is an important aesthetic in contemporary Textiles, as illustrated in *Bleach, Buckle and Burn* by Jill Pettifer and Annie Trevillion (Boyling 1998: 33). There is a search for new ways of treating surfaces, and installation art is finding significant expression in bringing together surface, space and form. Thus, I am exploring the work of some contemporary artists:
- **Tori de Mestre** I grew up in the same area as that from which de Mestre has taken much of her inspiration, and her work resonates with latent images of my life.
 - **Inge Hunter** I am taken by Hunter's openness - her willingness to expose the personal. She sheds light on ways of being, relating and achieving, and confronts social issues; she portrays an avidness for exploring the nature and qualities of materials and media.
 - **Rosalie Gascoigne** Gascoigne exploits the intrinsic qualities and potential of materials and objects, including those which frequently are overlooked because of their defunctness and obsolescence. She takes materials and objects out of context and reconstructs them as an expression of what she sees in them.
 - **Marta Rogoyska** Rogoyska works extensively in woven tapestries, and gouache and collage. Her work is evocative of relationships, and her imagery is 'optimistic'; it is zestful, dynamic and full of *joie de vivre* (Koumis 1996: 53).
- 3.6 I acknowledge that I have some distance to go before I can provide a strong theoretical framework based on the scholarly literature and works of art. My current endeavour includes the systemisation of literature and other points of references to form a framework that informs my own research.
- 4 Implications**
This section identifies what I hope to achieve and the questions that the study raises.
- 4.1 At this point, it would seem that the three major operational aspects of my program are:
- Observing and connecting with the 'natural' qualities of existing materials.
 - Transforming selected attributes (state, function, purpose, context, place and dimension) of those materials.
 - Composing with the transformed materials.
- These are the mechanisms by which I seek to address what I have described elsewhere as my goal of 'teasing unity through eclecticism'. And I have described my work as providing insights into the concept of 'relationship', particularly human relationship.
- 4.2 I envisage the process and product of my work as a pathway into understandings about 'relationship' - tensions and harmonies, complexities, and the transformations assumed by individuals who generate relationship. In some senses, my work will be an analog of 'relationship', and I seek to encounter 'relationship' through the intensive investigation of materials, their transformations, and through subsequent compositions.

5 Skills

This section identifies the skills I will need to develop.

- 5.1 I will place considerably more emphasis on creative and conceptual development than on specific skill development.
- 5.2 My work history has enabled me to develop a generous range of Textile-related skills - such as quilting, beading, machining, tailoring, pattern making, embroidery, tatting, crochet, and knitting. My experience gives me confidence in my ability to apply these skills in a wide variety of ways, to develop new skills in these areas, and to recognise my limitations.
- 5.3 I do not have sophisticated skills in the photographic recording of my work, and this is an area I will need to develop.
- 5.4 I am undecided on the nature of form and materials that will come together in my final work. I may require assistance in sculptural techniques.
- 5.5 I am confident in my ability to apply my writing and presentation skills at the levels required for the final report.
- 5.6 I have developed good time and project management skills.

6 Time Frame

This section identifies the likely time frame within which I will complete my study.

I believe my work will occur in several phases - though the detail of each phase is yet to be clarified.

- Phase 1 *Orientation to postgraduate study at ANU-ITA-CSA.* This includes:
- Becoming familiar with the setting, people, language and practices within the University as a whole, and the School in particular.
 - Establishing a place to work and people with whom to work in the Textile Workshop.
 - Becoming familiar with the facilities, including the library and its systems.
- Phase 2 *Establishment of theoretical and conceptual framework.* This includes:
- Refining the early ideas generated for the initial study proposal.
 - Exploring scholarly literature and the works of other artists.
 - Undertaking some initial exploratory work.
 - Presenting an initial Workshop seminar.
 - Preparing the Program for consideration by the Prescribed Authority.
- Phase 3 *Intensive exploration and experimentation.* This includes:
- Refining the early ideas generated for this Program, particularly the statement of vision/thesis.
 - Presenting seminars.
 - Subjecting my work to the critical scrutiny of peers and staff.
 - Providing work-in-progress reports.

Phase 4

Reflection, speculation and the development of a defensible position. This includes:

- Refining the conceptual framework.
- Consolidating the theoretical position I have developed.
- Subjecting my work to the critical scrutiny of the Review Panel.
- Speculating on the next steps and the implications of my work.

Phase 5

Development of final works. This includes:

- Preparing a final report.
- Displaying the final works.
- Subjecting my work to the critical scrutiny of the public.

Appendix Four

Curriculum Vitae

Camille Linda Ducker

1950 - Born Kiama, New South Wales

Education

1998 - 1999 Candidate for Master Of Visual Arts
Canberra School Of Art, Institute Of The Arts
Australian National University

1986 - 1988 Bachelor Of Arts (Visual Arts and Adult Education)
University Of Canberra

1981 - 1983 Fashion Technology Certificate
Canberra Institute Of Technology

Group Exhibitions

1999 *Gallimaufry*
Alliance Francaise, Canberra

1998 *Shields In The Park*
Sculpture Forum, Canberra (and on tour throughout
Australia)

1988 *Textiles 88*
Link Gallery, Canberra

Solo Exhibitions

1993 *Jackets On Display*
Fibre Design, Goulburn

1991 *Sculptures In Fabric*
Fibre Design, Goulburn

Collections

1990 *Featured Artist*
Opening of Fibre Design, Goulburn

Publications

Ducker C & Klimek C (1994)

'Competency Based Assessment In Design Studies:
Some Reflections' in B Clayton & R House *Working Away
With CBA* ANTA Brisbane

Ducker C & Klimek C (1994)

Competency Based Assessment In Design Studies
Occasional Paper CIT Canberra

Ducker C (1993)

'Recognition Of Prior Learning At CIT' in *Working
Opportunities For Women* (Second Edition) Canberra

Professional Contributions

1993

Judge, Textiles Section, NSW South East Region Rural
Exhibition

1992

Judge, National Wearable Art Exhibition

Awards

1995

NISOD Medal

Institute For Staff And Organisational Development, Texas
(International award for excellence in teaching and
leadership)

1994

Institute Achievement Award

Canberra Institute Of Technology (Outstanding contribution
to the Institute by a staff member)

1988

Faculty Commendation

University of Canberra (Meritorious academic achievement
in an undergraduate course)

1983

College Medal

Canberra Institute Of Technology (Outstanding academic
achievement in an accredited course)